

THE ORTHODOX WEEKLY BULETIN VESTAL, CLIFFWOOD, NEW JERSEY

O Hierarch, you are an icon of meekness and a teacher of temperance.

You have achieved the heights by humility and riches by poverty.

THE IDEAL TIME FOR SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

**It took over three hundred years before Christianity became the official religion of the civilized world. Many lives were lost and many struggles were recorded. One guiding light during this critical point in Church history was
SAINT SYLVESTER.**

Sylvester was ordained Bishop of Rome at the age of 30. By his wise teaching and pious example, he led his flock to the pastures of salvation. Sylvester is remembered for the reformation of certain Christian customs. Among them, he is credited with abolishing fasting on Saturday. He decreed that only Holy Saturday and those Saturday falling within fasting periods be observed.

Saint Sylvester's service occurred during the reign of Constantine the Great. The Emperor was not a Christian yet, but a pagan. Unlike the rulers before him, Constantine did not condone the brutal persecution of our Lord's followers. As time went on, he increased his interest in the Christian faith. Following a vision of Christ, holding a banner with a cross and inscription reading, "*In this sign conquer,*" Constantine was victorious in battle. It was Sylvester who was instrumental in the CONVERSION and BAPTISM of the Emperor and his mother, Helen.

Sylvester peacefully entered into the Heavenly Kingdom in the year 335. This was just 11 years after the founding of the Byzantine Empire. Thankfully, the triumph of our holy Faith was witnessed by this God-fearing servant.